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DOI 10.32458/ei.24.6  
UDK 069.5:39](497.521.2)  
688:39]:069.5(497.5)  
Review paper  
Received: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019  
Accepted: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019

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## The Research That Resulted in the Book About the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb

- On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb the author provides a brief overview of the origins and the preservation of the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys from 1919 to date. Based on long-term research and processing of the collections, as well as the recently released publication about traditional children's toys, the text presents the development of the Collection with a special reference to several centuries of toy making in some Croatian villages. The paper focuses on the regions of Prigorje, Zagorje and the Dalmatian Hinterland, localities in Croatia in which this activity has developed as home-based businesses that brought economic gains through manufacturing and sale of children's toys from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to this day. The text has been supported by documents and data collected during field research while co-operating with narrators, children's toys makers and through the study of archival and library collections, in order to preserve the heritage for future generations.

**Keywords:** Ethnographic Museum (Zagreb)  
Museum collection, toys, field researches

### INTRODUCTION

The Ethnographic Museum, which is marking its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year has been preserving a large number of valuable objects of *folk heritage* in its collections. They most frequently reached the Museum through acquisition or as gifts. In 1922, in the

first issue of the journal entitled *Narodna starina*,<sup>1</sup> its initiator and Editor-in-Chief Josip Matasović, Ph. D., published “A List of Private Promoters of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb” and stated that from its very inception in 1919, many private businesses provided their support to the Museum and its work through a broad range of gifts, which he supported with the attached list (s.n. 1922a: 92-96, 209-210, 353-354) from which it is evident that people originating both from different environments and different social classes donated objects, prompted by the wish to leave a trace of their time for future generations. Hence, the Museum management founded the institution of museum trustees that was approved by the government decree of “The Committee of Education and Religion” on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1921, striving to systematically collect the objects for museum collections and documentation (s.n. 1922b: 207-208, 347-352). A conclusion can be reached that the collections of the Ethnographic Museum have from the inception been created thanks to the donors and the latter fact applies to this date, since, in addition to a few acquisitions, objects are primarily collected and collections developed through precious donations made by private citizens.

The collections of the Ethnographic Museum have substantially increased during the first 100 years of its activities and hence the same applies also to the number of the collected children’s toys. As a result of their processing, the research work performed by the curators and a large number of presentations, as well as the recently published catalogue “The Collection of Traditional Children’s Toys”, this topic deserves to be presented in this year’s jubilee issue of the journal “Ethnological Research”. In addition to an overview of the origins and the development of the Collection, the text primarily addresses the issue of several centuries of toy making in individual Croatian villages in which this activity developed as home-based businesses that brought economic gains through manufacturing and sale of children’s toys from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to this day.

## ABOUT THE COLLECTION OF TRADITIONAL CHILDREN’S TOYS

One of the museum collections is the Collection of Traditional Children’s Toys, which, in accordance with the Ordinance on Internal Organisation and the Method of Work of the Ethnographic Museum<sup>2</sup>, is a part of the Department of Collections and Documentation. Since a large proportion of museum documentation is stored in the Croatian State Archives, we are not acquainted with substantial data that is still unexplored. In the forthcoming future we are planning to start a systematic processing of the previously mentioned materials and hence in this text I am providing only the available facts. In the journal “Ethnological Research” dedicated to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museum, the author and curator Nada Gjetvaj, mentioned that the organisation of the work of the professionals during the first years after the foundation of the museum was not divided

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1 *Narodna starina*, a journal for cultural history and ethnography of the Southern Slavs, was published from 1922 to 1935 and during that period 31 volumes were published.

2 As of the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018, in accordance with the Statute of the Ethnographic Museum dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016 (Class:612-03/16-06/3, Registry No.: 251-01-05-16-4), the collections and the documentation were integrated into one organisational unit – The Department of Collections and Documentation, pursuant to Article 5 of the Ordinance on Internal Organisation and the Method of Work of the Ethnographic Museum.

into work focused on specific topics and “hence all Museum professionals were involved in the study of several ethnographic topics and areas. A small number of members of the professional staff was also the main reason for this method of work at the Museum” (Gjetvaj 1989: 51). Moreover, she stated that Museum departments were established upon the increase in the number of staff members and a better organisation of work at the beginning of the 1960’s. The Statutes of the Ethnographic Museum dating back to the 1966 also provided the Internal Organisation of the Museum, which also included museum sections. In the Basic Crafts and Handicraft Section, objects made of wood were arranged in accordance with the type and hence it can be assumed that they also included children’s toys. According to the curator Josip Barlek, the previously mentioned Section and Depot in which children’s toys were housed were managed by the curator Ivanka Bakrač. Scientific and research departments were established in accordance with the Ordinance on Systematisation of Workplaces dating back to 1977, while the Section of Folk Handicraft and Traditional Crafts included the collection of pottery, basket weaving, wood and leather processing, musical instruments, small decorated wooden objects, pumpkin doodles, tobacco pipes and a distaff collection. Irrespective of the fact that children’s toys were not mentioned, a conclusion can be reached that they were included in this Section. Upon the retirement of the curator Ivanka Bakrač, the curator Josip Barlek took over the management of children’s toys although he said he had not been actively involved in the latter. I joined the Ethnographic Museum as a trainee curator in 1994 and I took over the management of children’s toys. Based on the Ordinance on Internal Organisation and Method of Work of the Ethnographic Museum dating back to 2002, it is evident that sections were transformed into departments and the Collections Department included the Collection of Children’s Toys, which from 2013 was referred to as the Collection of Traditional Children’s Toys. The same year saw the foundation of the Collection of Children’s Toys and Games. The latter was founded as a result of the museum project named the World of Toys when over a thousand children’s toys made in factories or in handicraft businesses were collected. They were made of different materials such as porcelain, metal, paper, plush and plastic from throughout the world starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to this date.

Systematic work on the Collection of Traditional Children’s Toys led to a comprehensive processing of the Collection. Hence, the collected documentation with the attached list of objects after the performed revision and a comprehensive processing of the objects was referred to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, which in 2017, based on the proposal put forward by the Expert Panel for Determining the Features of Cultural Heritage, reached a Decision on the Inclusion of the Protected Cultural Heritage into the Registry of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia – the List of Protected Cultural Heritage. By October 2018, the Collection included 1,134 objects and it has been continuously increasing. It primarily comprises of toys and to a lesser extent children’s games from rural areas both of Croatia and Europe. The objects have been collected since 1920 and they have been made from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to date, primarily of natural materials. Each object was entered in the Inventory Control Register of the

Museum under the shelf mark Et 6 – Ethnographica<sup>3</sup> and 27 objects under the shelf mark VA - Varia.<sup>4</sup> In addition to inventory control registers, each object had handwritten catalogue cards with basic information and on the back there were frequently drawings of the described object. Each object is currently processed using M++ museum management software that, in addition to written information, also includes an image from Mmedia,<sup>5</sup> while the Museum has been introducing the new version of the museum management software - Modulor.

As the Collection Manager, I managed the collection processing and performed research, accessioned new objects into the collection, staged exhibitions and implemented projects and prepared the nomination for the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Moreover, by the end of 2018 a comprehensive catalogue "The Collection of Traditional Children's Toys" was published. In addition to the catalogue, in its first part a presentation was provided of the latest research in connection with several centuries of making of traditional children's toys throughout Croatia.<sup>6</sup>

During my long-term experience of work on the museum collection, I reached a conclusion that the objects need to be classified in order to facilitate the search both for the users and visitors. Hence, in the catalogue "The Collection of Traditional Children's Toys" I arranged the objects into several units. The first unit includes the toys made by children in rural areas of Croatia, as well as those made in schools and toys made by adults inspired by the toys they played with in their childhood. Based on the records in the Inventory Control Register Et 6<sup>7</sup> at the Spring Salon Exhibition in Zagreb, held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1923, the objects made by elementary school pupils were exhibited at the Exhibition of Children's Handiwork. They included wooden objects, most frequently usable objects, yet made as children's toys, models or scale models in miniature size (for example distaffs EMZ Et 2717d-g, bobbins EMZ Et 2717i-j, carts EMZ Et 2613a, EMZ Et 2616a, ploughs EMZ Et 2619a and a tiny bed EMZ Et 2617a, to name a few). The individual objects made by children include name tags of the children who made them, the grade they attended and their age (most frequently between the ages of 11 and 13). These toys were primarily made in a simple way, of natural materials (wood, corn husks, hazelnut, walnut and textile). Hence, the collection includes preserved bows and arrows, rifles, water mills, guns, reed pipes, balls and dolls, among other things. The second group includes toys like cradles, snow sleds, tiny dolls, doll clothing, made by adults for their children and grandchildren in villages throughout Croatia. The third unit are toys made by individuals with dexterity in handicraft from the Croatian regions of Prigorje, Zagorje and the Dalmatian Hinterland, intended for sale. The fourth group

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3 Find out more about documentation management at the Ethnographic Museum and shelf marks in Zorić 2015: 53-59.

4 The collection *Varia* has existed since 1935 when the first perishable and fragile object (seeds, straw, dough) was entered. Over the years different objects were accessioned into it that are currently included in different collections and even in the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys.

5 Mmedia is an image database in which visual documentation has been saved, intended for identification of objects entered in M++ database.

6 Find out more in the catalogue "The Collection of Traditional Children's Toys" (Biškupić Bašić 2018).

7 The objects of the Ethnographic Collection I from the number 1 to 5,000.

comprises of toys from European countries. In addition to children's toys from Croatia, in 1923 the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb saw a donation of toys from Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Soon after that, in 1927 the first toy originating from Italy was acquired and from 2009 the Museum collections were expanded with toys from Poland, Portugal, Russia, Germany and Sweden.

By 1948 the Museum collected 210 children's toys, 11 technological objects (templates, tools and a rooster in the process of making) and 3 children's games. From 1948 to 1989 the Museum collected 10 children's toys, while in 1989 and in 1990 the Museum collections expanded by 62 children's toys and 6 technological objects (tools, templates and a small horse in the process of making). From 1994 to the end of 2018 the Museum collected 797 toys, 3 children's games and 32 technological objects (tools, templates and a butterfly in the process of making). Consequently, it is evident that since 1994 the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys has been systematically expanding, keeping abreast of the work of master craftsmen, while striving to accession any new and more innovative toys into the collection. The toys originating from European countries have been collected, since we have been focusing also on becoming acquainted with the toys originating from other environments, in order to be able to provide the visitors to the new exhibition with an insight into foreign production. These toys accessioned into the museum collections through donations both by individuals and institutions such as Muzeum Zabawek i Zabawy from Kielce with which the Ethnographic Museum had established a successful long-term co-operation.

## **THE HISTORY OF ORGANISED CHILDREN'S TOY MANUFACTURING IN CROATIA**

The largest number of toys from the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys are toys made in Croatian villages and they were intended for sale. Toy manufacturing was organised by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Croatian regions of Prigorje, Zagorje and in the Dalmatian Hinterland, primarily as home-based businesses. The inhabitants of individual villages in which the life was hard, distant from larger centres, living in large family units, with a little arable land, faced with a lack of electricity and poor road connections, were the ones involved exclusively in manufacturing of children's toys for sale. The development of this activity in the previously mentioned regions was certainly due to the wealth of forests and different species of trees suitable for wood carving. Nevertheless, the toy makers were primarily gifted individuals who used their artistry and ideas to make toys that were appealing also to urban children. Due to invaluable visionaries, primarily "The Women's Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Popular Folk Arts and Crafts", founded in 1913 in Zagreb, led by the President baroness Maja Turković and the Secretary Ženka Frangeš (s.n. 1913: 1-14), over the years there were substantial changes and significant advancement in home-based business, as well as in terms of organised toy manufacturing. The members of the Association were very active in their wish to help the Croatian peasants and focused on the prosperity of home-based businesses. They extremely highly

valued education of young people who would be able to perfect the method of making handmade products. Hence, in the 1920's, courses started being organised, striving to teach the Croatian peasants about how to both improve and simplify their life using their creativity. Based on the text by Branka Frangeš in "A Contribution to Introduction and Promotion of the Croatian Home-Based Businesses", the members of the Women's Association referred a petition to the Minister of Trade and Industry Želimir Mažuranić, Ph.D., in 1929 in which they described the state of affairs, the development and progress made by home-based businesses in developed countries and a proposal in terms of how to provide assistance to the Croatian home-based craft businesses. Moreover, the author of the text stated as follows "With reference to the previously mentioned petition, the State Institute for the Promotion of Industry and Crafts of the Ministry of Trades and Crafts made a large number of calls to institutions and private entities to express their opinion about this issue, highlighting primarily the importance of the development and progress of home-based craft businesses in terms of economic advancement of poor social classes, especially those in rural areas" (Frangeš 1930: 5) and she concluded that the latter broke the impasse concerning the issue of home-based craft businesses.

The beginning of the 1930's saw the establishment of co-operatives for manufacturing of children's toys that organised the employment of inhabitants of rural areas in which the tradition already existed. The objective of this type of operation was to jointly manufacture and sell handmade products and in that way improve the economic circumstances of the families. In the 1940's, toy manufacturing was raised to the pinnacle, many wood carvers were involved in it and the state established *Zemaljski zavod za kućnu radinost* (The Land Institute for Home-Based Businesses), which helped in the organisation of the manufacturing and market positioning of their products. The gradual rural electrification helped handicraft businesses to accelerate and simplify product processing. More dexterous individuals were in charge of encouraging and educating the interested co-villagers. The required materials were acquired in an organised way through co-operatives in order to improve both the quality and speed. In addition, commercial businesses were established as mediators during sale and the state abolished the Land Institute and founded the company Narodne rukotvorine (Handmade Folk Products). It became the main mediator between peasants involved in handicraft and the market. The specific objective of Folk Handmade Products was monitoring and encouraging of manufacturing in the Croatian villages and sale both in the country and beyond. On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1950, Narodne rukotvorine (Handmade Folk Products) changed its name into „Rukotvorine, proizvodnja i promet narodnih rukotvorina“, Zagreb ("Handmade Products, Manufacturing and Sale of Folk Handmade Products, Zagreb"), while the company activity remained unchanged.<sup>8</sup> The stagnation started in the mid-1950's when co-operatives started gradually dying out, as an increasing number of people involved in handicraft joined factories, organised sale decreased and urban children started preferring the toys manufactured in factories, which were taking over an increasing market share due to the use of new materials like plastic.

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8 NN 61/50.

Handmade wooden children's toys are currently available only in a small area of the Croatian region of Zagorje, irrespective of severe competition with modern industrial toys. Due to continuous work by Zagorje-based masters of handicraft and the beauty of the toys, in 2009 they were included into the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as the Art of Making of Traditional Wooden Children's Toys from the Croatian Region of Zagorje.

After a brief overview of organised making of children's toys in Croatia, individual centres in which it developed and operated will be presented hereinafter.

## PRIGORJE - VIDOVEC

There is a long history behind the making of children's toys in Vidovec, a village located on the eastern slopes of the mountain referred to as Zagrebačka Gora (Zagreb Mountain), which was confirmed by the text about toy making published in 1884 in *Obrtnik*, the journal of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts in Zagreb, in which the author described the living conditions of the inhabitants of Vidovec and the reasons for which they were involved in toy making. The development of this artistry was certainly also due to poverty on the one hand and carving skills on the other. Following the proposal put forward by the Women's Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Popular Folk Arts and Crafts, the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1932 saw the start of organised making of wooden children's toys upon the foundation of the First Peasant Co-operative for the Making of Children's Toys in Vidovec, where the inaugural meeting was presided over by Ženka Frangeš.<sup>9</sup> At the time Vidovec had 800 inhabitants in around 150 households.<sup>10</sup> From its foundation to its winding up the Co-operative had almost a hundred members.<sup>11</sup> During the existence of the Co-operative, the inhabitants of Vidovec made a wide range of motifs, comprising primarily of characters such as deer, storks, cats, foxes, dogs and roosters, to name a few. Besides animals, they made also different vehicles, such as carts, snow sleds, emergency vehicles, trams, aircraft, luxury cars and freight vehicles, as well as buses, among others. They also made objects in connection with the household – small furniture items for the room or the kitchen such as beds, tables, chairs, wardrobes, chests, cradles, benches and frequently even scale models of old houses from the Posavina region and tiny chairs on which children, as well as adults could sit. In the hamlet named Čigiri the inhabitants were primarily involved in basket weaving and they used the same technique for toy making. All the toys had wheels so that children could easily push or pull them. They normally sold them in Zagreb, fourteen kilometres away, more specifically on Jelačić Square, in front of the Cathedral, on the Dolac market place and in their own village through which the pilgrims

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9 HR-HDA 605/58 Central Association of the Croatian Peasant Co-operatives limited by guarantee Zagreb with the members/Minutes of the General Meeting.

10 HR-HDA 605/58 Central Association of the Croatian Peasant Co-operatives limited by guarantee Zagreb with the members/An Operational Review Report dating back to 1933.

11 The number of members of the Co-operatives was also recorded in the Bound Book that includes 95 "Membership Application Forms", which was kept from the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1935 to the 4<sup>th</sup> December 1948. (EMZ, File 311/2).



used to pass on their way to Marija Bistrica shrine. They also visited both parish fairs and other fairs in the nearby towns and cities, while upon the foundation of Narodne rukotvorine (Handmade Folk Products), a company for manufacturing and sale of folk handmade products, they were involved in organised selling of their products in stores that distributed them both in the country and abroad. In 1954, a wide range of changes occurred in terms of the operation of the Co-operative, since the Regulation on Craft Stores and Craft Businesses was adopted, the old name was deleted and a new name Prva hrvatska seljačka zadruga za izradu dječjih igračaka<sup>12</sup> (The First Peasant Co-operative for the Manufacturing of Children's Toys) was adopted. According to the report by Ljudevit Komušar, the last President of the Co-operative and Josip Komušar, the Foreman, the Co-operative was wound up on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1956 due to "a lack of working capital for the purchase both of raw material and other materials".<sup>13</sup> The same document also explained that the Co-operative was not dissolved because of its own poor performance but due to outstanding receivables for the products delivered to other clients. Against the backdrop of the previously mentioned set of circumstances, most toy makers joined the nearby factories and not many toy makers joined the co-operatives that showed unsatisfactory performance. Eventually, they were left with no resources and toy manufacturing in Vidovec died out. Since 1922, around 80 toys have been accessioned into the collections of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb as a result of individual efforts, cardboard templates – in Croatian referred to as *mustre* for six animal characters, as well as the process of toy making and documentation of the First Peasant Co-operative for the Making of Children's Toys in Vidovec with the corresponding seal.

## HRVATSKO ZAGORJE - LAZ STUBIČKI, LAZ BISTRIČKI, MARIJA BISTRICA, TUGONICA, TURNIŠĆE AND GORNJA STUBICA

Wooden toy making has been developing and surviving in individual families for generations in several villages in the Croatian region of Zagorje, located on the pilgrimage route towards the national shrine of Mary, the Mother of God, in Marija Bistrica, uninterruptedly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to this day. Consequently, it is not surprising that the largest number of toys in the Collection of the Ethnographic Museum has been preserved from this region. More dexterous men carved wood that surrounded them, since this region abounds in forests. They made single-reed instruments, in the Croatian region of Zagorje referred to as *žveglice*, initially simpler ones and subsequently double reed instruments dyed in natural yellow colours or decorated by burning of the wooden surface and by making patterns in Croatian referred to as *šare*. Over time the product range of single and double-reed instruments increased and hence they started making them in the shape of a rooster, a little bird, a small trumpet, a cello, a hammer, a gun or a fish and they painted them in cheerful colours, most frequently in red with patterns in a rainbow of colours. One of the best known toys is a push-toy in the

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12 EMZ, File 311/8.

13 EMZ, File 311/1, File 311/20.



shape of a bird or a butterfly with the wings flapping, it has wheels and a handle or a stick to push onto which the toy is attached. They also made little horses in different sizes painted in black, decorated in red and white, adding them a mane and a tail with hair, as well as buckboard, vehicles drawn by one, two or four horses, horse-drawn milk cart, horse-drawn hay wagon, ox cart and donkeys. They also made cars, lorries, aircrafts, trains, trams in their workshops and they expanded their product range with helicopters, seaplanes, tractors, firefighting vehicles and other vehicles that children find interesting. Children are also fond of children's furniture - tables, chairs, wardrobes, mirrored bedside tables, chests of drawers, bed and cradles in different sizes and colours adapted to today's larger-size dolls. Children also find interesting push and pull toys that can be moved with wheels and/or a handle or stick that is attached to the body of the toy. Besides the previously mentioned butterfly, the latter type of toys include dancers spinning around and dancing, carousels, jumping horses, rattle horses and woodpeckers. The most popular toy was one with a dual function – it was intended to help during the walk towards the shrine (pilgrims chose their walking sticks based on their height) and it was also a toy. A reed instrument was made at the top of the stick in the shape of an axe into which a child blows and plays the latter musical instrument and it hence becomes an object used for playing. Upon returning home adults used to give it to the children as a gift and a souvenir of the pilgrimage. The villages Tugonica and Turnišće saw the development of manufacturing of small children's instruments – tamburitzas and hence only a few carpenters manufactured small, medium-sized and large tamburitzas referred to as bisernice (made of ebony and decorated with mother of pearl), dangubice (used by shepherds to kill time, hence the name) and brač (three double or single strings), which is also currently the case in the same way as it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They used the templates inherited from old masters that used to make objects for sale in home-based handicraft businesses and in time they joined organised co-operatives. Hence, in 1934 Zadruga za izradu dječjih igračaka s.o.j. (The Co-operative for the Manufacturing of Children's Toys limited by guarantee) was founded in Marija Bistrica<sup>14</sup> and its activity encompassed the entire administrative municipality of Marija Bistrica. Its specific objective was:

“...to provide revenue for its members through manufacturing and sale of children's toys, as well as, in addition to ensuring the best possible working conditions, provide them with the necessary tools and materials, encourage them to work and perform their duties in order to improve their material status. Moreover, they committed to grant loans to their members that they required for their business...”<sup>15</sup>

The same Co-operative was mentioned also in 1945, yet this time it was referred to as Zadruga za izradbu i prodaju dječjih igračaka s.o.j. (The Co-operative for Manufacturing and Sale of Children's Toys limited by guarantee) in Marija Bistrica.<sup>16</sup> From its foundation it also employed the inhabitants of the neighbouring Tugonica. In July 1946

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14 NN 257/34.

15 Ibid.

16 A copy of the letter is stored in the Documentation EMZ.

a new “General Law on Co-operatives”<sup>17</sup> was enacted and in April 1947 “Regulation on the Method of Foundation of Co-operatives, on the Rules of Co-operatives and Entering of Co-operatives into the Register of Co-operatives”<sup>18</sup> in accordance with which all the existing co-operatives needed to be registered again once they complied with the General Law and the Regulation, while those that did not do that would be dissolved. Hence, toy manufacturers from Tugonica founded their independent Co-operative on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1948. It was Prva Hrvatska seljačka zadruga za kućnu radinost s.o.j. (The First Croatian Peasant Co-operative for Home-Based Handicraft Business limited by guarantee) in Tugonica.<sup>19</sup> Company objects included as follows “to manufacture handmade objects using the workforce of its members; to be involved in the procurement of materials and raw materials required for the business operations of its members; to raise the level of its members in terms of rational, cultural and technically arranged home-based handicraft business; to perform all the other tasks as determined by the rules”<sup>20</sup> Not far from the previously mentioned municipality, in the administrative municipality of Donja Stubica, two more co-operatives were involved in children’s toy manufacturing: Hrvatska seljačka zadruga za izradbu i promet raznih drvenih dječjih igračaka i svirala s. o. j. (The Croatian Peasant Co-operative for the Manufacturing and Sale of Different Wooden Children’s Toys and Reed Instruments limited by guarantee) Laz Stubički was mentioned in Narodne novine in 1948 because of the proposal for the merger with Nabavno–prodajna zadruga (Procurement and Sales Co-operative) in Laz Bistrički.<sup>21</sup> In accordance with the information provided in Narodne novine, the former co-operative was removed from the Register of Co-operatives on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 1949.<sup>22</sup> One of the last members of the Co-operative and its President Stjepan Hrastović Kosturaš, who I talked with at the end of the 1980’s, stated that around sixty members worked in the co-operative and they used to sell the toys that they carried in their backpacks and suitcases to fairs and parish fairs in Zagreb, Marija Bistrica, Varaždin, Krapina, Split and Dubrovnik. After the Second World War, co-operatives for home-based businesses were established in another way. Kotarski savez Krapina (Krapina District Alliance), which included the villages Bistrički and Stubički Laz, as well as Tugonica, appointed an officer for home-based businesses at the Local Economy Department. The latter officer organised the purchase of products on behalf of the co-operative that after 1952 was referred to as Hrvatska seljačka zadruga za izradu i promet dječjih igračaka i sviraljka (The Croatian Peasant Co-operative for the Manufacturing and Sale of Children’s Toys and Reed Instruments) in Laz and it comprised of 109 members. Consequently, a conclusion can be reached that the two co-operatives from Laz Bistrički and Stubički merged in 1949 and continued operating as one co-operative with a larger number of members. The previously mentioned Co-operative from Tugonica changed its name into Zadruga

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17 NN 59/46.

18 NN 33/47.

19 NN 53/48.

20 NN 53/48.

21 HR-HDA-1163/11.

22 NN 64/49.

za kućnu radinost Tugonica (Co-operative for Home-Based Business Tugonica).<sup>23</sup> It was the second co-operative of this type in the area of Krapina–Zagorje County in the 1950's that was involved in organised manufacturing of children's toys.

By the end of the 1950's work through co-operatives and generation of revenue through manufacturing and sale of toys was gradually dying out, as a result of migration of population, industrialisation and return to agriculture and hence only a few manufacturers continued with the activity, performing it independently in the form of home-based handicraft business. According to the research, until this day this artistry has survived, irrespective of plethora of problems, among some twenty inhabitants of the towns Laz Stubički, Laz Bistrički, Marija Bistrica, Tugonica, Turnišće and Gornja Stubica in the families Mikuš, Mesar, Majdak, Hajnić, Hrastović, Ivanić, Kunić, Cesar, Gorički, Topolovec, Šagud, Šuštić and Fijan. During my conversations with the narrators, children's toy manufacturers in 2018, I recorded their statements in which they pointed out the fact that handicraft business was becoming increasingly more difficult. Hence, I concluded that there was a high risk of extinction of this invaluable artistry included also in the international list of protected intangible cultural heritage.

## DALMATIAN HINTERLAND - ZELOVO<sup>24</sup>

Besides the previously mentioned centres of children's toy manufacturing in the North of Croatia and in the South, in Zelovo, a village in the Dalmatian Hinterland, not far from Sinj, at an altitude of 800 m where winters are severe and long, talented wood carvers were involved in additional activities in the form of home-based business in order to make a living for them and their family. The latter was confirmed by 23 small whistles locally known as *svirci* or *pištavci*, donated to the Ethnographic Museum in 1933. They were intended for children and were made of field maple<sup>25</sup> wood, decorated through surface carvings and varnished or painted in the manner typical of Zelovo, in gentle yellow with gentle red and green ornaments. They are of different shapes – ranging from cylindrical, multi-edged, rhomboidal, rectangular to square, from 5 to 11 cm long. Moreover, children's woodwind musical instruments locally known as *diple* made around 1930 have been preserved, decorated in the same way as the previously mentioned reed instruments, yet with a human head drawn on them. A very nice collection of similar objects – whistles - locally referred to as *svirci* is preserved at the Ethnographic Museum in Split, while Branka Vojnović-Traživuk wrote about them as follows: “The artistry of wood carvers from Zelovo is evident from their design. Hence, an interesting visual expression was achieved in some small-size samples” (Vojnović-

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23 Published in Lexicon of Co-operatives (Kovačević 1956: volume No.1/660, 682, XIV.).

24 Concerning children's toys manufacturing in Dalmatian Hinterland, irrespective of the fact that in the 1990's I was already involved in field research and taking notes of the narratives of the living children's toys manufacturers that showed the existence of organised toy manufacturing, at the time there was no written evidence. It was only recently when I was in the State Archives in Split that I came across the documentation that removed many of my doubts and led me to new insights that I published in the catalogue entitled “The Collection of Traditional Children's Toys”, which I provide in this text.

25 Field maple is a tree from maple family (Kovačec 2003: 314-315).

Traživuk 2015: 74). In addition, she pointed out that the best known wooden whistles, locally known as *svirci*, in Dalmatia were those made around 1930 in Zelovo near Sinj. They were sold in different fairs and regularly at the Fair of St. Domnius in Split (Ibid.). In the publication entitled “Kućna radinost – organizacija i rad putem poljoprivrednog zadrugarstva” (“Home-Based Business – Organisation and Work through Agricultural Co-operatives”) printed in 1949, the authors mentioned wood carving activity, which, as a branch of home-based business was gradually disappearing. They believed there was no valid reason for that, as they stated that in the country there were different types of wood for carving in large quantities, as well as talented young men and old wood carvers, irrespective of the fact that many were not aware that an additional job could be a good revenue source. They concluded that most wood carvers were located in the Dalmatian Hinterland, around Sinj and in Ravni kotari, as well as some in Slavonia and in the Croatian region of Zagorje. The village of Zelovo in the district of Sinj, is known by wood carving, manufacturing of cigarette holders or locally named *cigaretnici* (in regional Croatian, based on German *cigaretšpic*, while the authors referred to them as *cigarluci*) and children’s toys (Pasarić i Ružička 1947: 17, 26). These statements were corroborated by the Report of the Local People’s Committee of Dalmatia addressed to the “Zemaljski zavod za kućnu radinost” (Land Institute for Home-Based Business) in 1947. The report stated that both utilitarian objects and artistic and decorative objects were produced in the district of Sinj. The objects in question included:

“wood carving/tobacco boxes, chests of drawers, picture frames and children’s toys, among other things. The previously mentioned objects were made in Zelovo, in addition to wood carving, children’s toys and cigarette holders. The number of people involved in wood carving and in making of children’s toys reached around 10 and in case of need it was possible to employ around 10 more people. The number of people involved in making cigarette holders reached around 300 and in case of need it was possible to employ around 400 more people. The raw materials required for wood carving were provided from the forests located on the border of the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The raw materials required for cigarette holders were provided primarily from the nearby village forests”.<sup>26</sup>

In accordance to the delivery notes provided by the Zagreb Fair,<sup>27</sup> to which the district trading company *Kamešnica* delivered for sale a wooden box with a list and prices of the products by wood carvers from Zelovo on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1949, a conclusion can be reached that at that point they were still involved in the making of their products and they were selling them through the previously mentioned company. In the letter addressed to the District People’s Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1949, the commissioner Rade Dumanić concluded that in the village of Zelovo the wood carver Ante Delaš had the leading position in the making of wooden objects decorated with genuine folk ornaments. In order to promote home-based business and enable wood carvers to work undisturbed, he thought that Ante Delaš needed to address the Local Committee for Industry and Crafts in Split and provide them with object templates that he made

26 HR-DAST 2882 ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

27 HR-DAST ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

in order to launch the manufacturing.<sup>28</sup> It is important to point out that the previously mentioned wood carver already in January 1950 manufactured different carved objects for the Association of Visual Artists in Zagreb - *Likum*,<sup>29</sup> while Stjepan Domazet was mentioned as the potential second-ranking master carver.<sup>30</sup>

Home-based business was launched in the Zelovo region in the district of Sinj and in the document that dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> January 1950 it is evident that the main children's toy manufacturing authorisation holder was the previously mentioned carver Ante Delaš. According to him "These toys could be much better made and decorated if toy manufacturers were provided the required material and tools, besides the wood, and if they were guaranteed the supply."<sup>31</sup> The same letter shows that children's toys were made in Zelovo, more specifically as follows "...birds named thick knees, flapping wing toy birds on wheels, toy butterflies on wheels, pull toy horses and different types of reed instruments" (Ibid.). Master Delaš concluded that:

"...even other toys could be manufactured if the required resources were provided and then 10,000 to 15,000 toys could be manufactured on an annualised level. We have the wood, but we also need shellac, ethanol, yellow, green and red paint and a certain amount of coloured varnish, as well as nails from 1 to 3 cm long".

Potential carvers were also mentioned - Ivan Jukić, known as Kero, Josip Delaš, Josip Jukić, Ivan Jukić and Stjepan Jukić, while Ante Delaš would be in charge of their additional training. The District People's Committee Sinj concluded that the latter branch of home-based business could progress successfully and achieve a required level if a workshop was opened in the village of Zelovo in which the manufacturers would jointly manufacture toys following the instructions and supervised by the carver Ante Delaš. The latter would require the construction of a small workshop, of dimensions 10 x 5 x 2,5m, yet the materials would need to be provided. The carvers provided the Commission with the templates for their toys – a winged horse, a gymnast, a propeller, a reed instrument in the shape of a hammer, a reed instrument in the shape of a bird, children's woodwind musical instrument locally known as *diple*, a flapping wing toy birds, a car, birds named thick knees and a toy musical instrument, whistle, in regional Croatian dialect known as *svirak*. One more document provides insight into the period of the origins of organised children's toy manufacturing. The latter is a travel report of the representative of the company Narodne rukotvorine (Folk Handmade Products), Albert Plevan, who inspected the territory with the officer and engineer Tončić from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1950 for the purpose of organising home-based handicraft businesses. Hence, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February they visited Sinj and obtained a Report by the

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28 HR-DAST 4549, ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

29 The Register of Co-operatives dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1948 includes the entry *Likum* purchasing and sales co-operative of visual artists limited by guarantee in Zagreb. The co-operative was intended for purchasing and making the accessories and materials required for artistic work of its members; as well as to organise its workshops, stores and companies for manufacturing and sale of artworks and products; to publish art magazines, monographs and artwork reproductions, among other things. (NN 61/48).

30 HR-DAST 467, ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

31 HR-DAST 1175, ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

District People's Committee about the intentions of opening a workshop for 30 workers in Zelovo who would have been involved in wood carving, children's toy manufacturing, as well as the manufacturing of wooden agricultural tools. The premises for the workshop had been provided, as well as several woodwork benches and fixtures. The workshop would have been led by Ante Delaš, the best carver and a member of *Likum*. The administration would have been managed in Sinj. All the workers would have been working at the workshop rather than at home. The workshop would have been opened as a co-operative workshop, as they had been granted a loan of 90,000, yet they intended to transform it into a Peasant's Working Co-operative for Animal Husbandry and Home-Based Handicraft Business.<sup>32</sup> According to the Lexicon of Co-operatives published in 1957, people living in the area around Sinj were still involved in wood carving (in the village of Zelovo). Moreover, it provided the information that in that area peasants were involved in carving of a single-stringed musical instrument, in Croatian known as *gusle*, cigarette boxes, wooden spoons, children's woodwind musical instrument – *diple* and a double flute in Croatian referred to as *dvojnica*, to name a few (Kovačević 1957: 1225).

Wooden children's toys in Zelovo, as well as in northern Croatia, were manufactured primarily by men, although children were taught how to make them from the early age. According to the narrative by Josip Delaš, known as Kudre, small children were already involved in "drilling holes" and "cutting sticks for the push and pull toy birds", while the document from 1949 mentioned also two girls. They were the fifteen-year old Jukić, Iva Ivanova and the fourteen-year old Delaš, Danica Antina.<sup>33</sup> This information confirms that, besides male children, even female children aged only 14 used to help adults in their work and they also learnt how to independently make individual objects intended for sale. They used aspen wood<sup>34</sup> (in Zelovo referred to as *trpetljika*), which is widespread in the previously mentioned area and is suitable for processing, since it is soft, lightweight, medium-strength and elastic and its white colour is suitable for painting. Irrespective of the fact that there is a smaller number of motifs compared with some other previously mentioned locations, they are unique in their expression: manually shaped, with knives, painted with watercolours, in red and green on a yellow background. Most of these toys are push and pull toys with wheels. They sold their products in Sinj, which was only fifteen kilometres away and they reached it on foot, in a four-hour walk on hardly accessible and steep paths. They could be seen on the market place (locally known as *pijaca*) in front of the sanctuary of the Miraculous Lady of Sinj or on the market place (locally referred to as *pazar*) in Split, while on special occasions, such as the festivity/(locally known as *fijera*) of Saint Domnius and on the waterfront. They also travelled to other Dalmatian centres such as Imotski, Knin, Vrgorac, Vrljika, Makarska, carrying toys in their backpacks and offered them to the local urban population.

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32 HR-DAST 2148, ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

33 HR-DAST 940, ONOD/LOK-PRIV 1-3, box 42/1950.

34 Aspen is a wood in the willow family (Kovačec 2003: 309-310).

The last family that was involved in children's toymaking in Zelovo was the family of Jakov Delaš. His sons Stanko, Ivan and Mate, as well as his daughter Kata, had been working with their father from their childhood. In 2000, when he stopped working because of illness, his sons took over his work. According to Stanko Delaš, in 2018, soon after their father's death in 2002 they stopped being involved in carving, as they had other occupations and duties and there was no more demand for or interest in their toys on the market. Only a small number of their toys are currently publicly available, preserved in museums such as the Ethnographic Museum Split and the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, in whose collection there are currently 99 children's toys from Zelovo.

## CONCLUSION

The Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb is a crucial cultural institution of the Republic of Croatia that is in charge of both the tangible and intangible ethnographic heritage. The primary task of its employees, primarily the curators and collection managers, currently, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, besides collecting *folk culture* objects, also includes museological processing, storage, presentation and communication. Experience has proved that field work of ethnologists is of fundamental importance for integral communication with the society, while the result of the previously mentioned synergy includes valuable donations, quality projects, exhibitions and publications.

One such book is a book about toys, which provides insights both from the professional and scientific aspect, published by the end of 2018 as the Catalogue of the Collection of Traditional Children's Toys. The topic addressed both in the book and in this text are children's toys from the collections of the Museum, a historical overview of the origins and development of the artistry of making of traditional children's toys in Croatia, with an emphasis on the research performed by the centres in which this activity developed as the principal economic activity from manufacturing, sale and use, not only in the distant past, but also in the present.

Traditional children's toys are an unavoidable part of the collections of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, while those resulting from organised manufacturing in the Croatian villages intended for sale have been comprehensively explored. Notwithstanding the fact that children's toy manufacturing in individual centres died out, it has continued to date in a small area of the Croatian region of Zagorje, defying time and a plethora of global influences. They are manually shaped by master wood carvers, using natural authentic materials and painting them in cheerful environmentally-friendly colours. Children's toys are not only a recognisable Croatian product, but they have also become one of the national symbols and a testimony of original creative work that has transcended the Croatian borders. Moreover, they have been integrated into the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, becoming the international heritage. Diligent work of the museum staff must have contributed, as they have been preserving them since the very foundation of the Museum.



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